A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY ON WELLBEING AT WORK IN THE BIOPHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR AT ASTRAZENECA GLOBAL - BULGARIA

1. Organisations involved
AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria
AstraZeneca Global

2. Description of the case

2.1. Introduction

AstraZeneca Global is one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies with approximately 57,200 employees (46% in Europe, 31% in the Americas and 23% in Asia-Pacific), in over 100 countries and an increased presence onto the emerging markets (China, Brazil, Mexico, Russia).

The company carries out researches and manufactures pharmaceutical products for six major health care areas addressing the most severe illnesses the people worldwide have to face such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, infections, neurological and respiratory illnesses.

AstraZeneca Bulgaria is a subsidiary of AstraZeneca Global that is located in Sofia, Bulgaria and has over 100 employees. They constitute an ambitious and young team as most of the employees are young workers.

Given the workforce diversity AstraZeneca Global has to cope with, its overall policies have been adapted to the large variety of its employees' background, educational and cultural differences, work experience and skills. Therefore, the company has put a significant emphasis to implement its strategies on the workforce wellbeing at AstraZeneca Bulgaria and, in most of the cases, they constituted a step ahead and a model for similar undertakings in the region.

Fig. 1 AstraZeneca Bulgaria employee team
‘For our employees, we provide a culture in which they can feel appreciated, energised and rewarded for their contribution. For our shareholders, we aim to deliver value through our continued focus on innovation and running our business efficiently. For the wider community, we want to be valued for the contribution our medicines can make to society and trusted for the way in which we do business.’

2.2. Aims

AstraZeneca Bulgaria has permanently focused on a well-targeted Health and Wellbeing Strategy for its employees alongside with adequate occupational health and safety and work organisational measures. The company has also implemented an active Corporate Responsibility programme addressing the employees’ needs, its partners and the community as well.

The measures taken have resulted in safer and healthier workplaces, employees’ positive assessment regarding the quality of their work and life and a leading position of the company onto the Bulgarian and regional pharmaceutical market.

The objectives of the above measures mainly consist of:

- To improve employees’ health and safety, through the implementation of an efficient prevention policy and integrated management system within the company
- To ensure employees’ wellbeing at work, increase the quality of their work and life and promote a good work-life balance for the employees
- To get a more satisfied workforce through effective measures tackling job security, fair wages, additional medical assistance and social security services for the employees, and a judicious policy of human resources
- To meet the young workers’ particular needs at work through tailored training and increased career opportunities
- Efficient organisational measures meant to support the company’s global policy, including a steady Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the employees
- To implement effective policies meant to ensure a judicious recruitment and selection of the personnel, career promotion and training
- Improving employee engagement
- Further developing leadership and management capabilities
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- Ensuring a permanent two-way communication between the management and the employees’ representatives within the company
- To set clear targets focused on continuous improvement in terms of a successful business strategy, workforce policies, societal and environmental improvement measures.

2.3. **What was done, and how?**

AstraZeneca declared mission is ‘to make a meaningful difference to patient health through great medicines that bring benefit for patients and add value for the stakeholders and society’. The strategy developed by the company on this purpose includes a series of key directions meant to ensure ‘a world class productivity in R&D (research and development), increased external collaboration, global orientation, stronger customer orientation, operational efficiency with a flexible cost basis’.

In accomplishing its ambitious business objectives, the company equally promotes an efficient occupational safety and health policy, an effective wellbeing strategy alongside with organisational measures and a responsible business approach.

In January 2011, the company launched a new Global Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Policy that was accompanied by a complementary Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the employees of all its sites worldwide. Therefore, AstraZeneca Bulgaria started to put in place both initiatives of AstraZeneca Global and developed additional measures in this respect, including a wider approach to the employee health programmes, social responsibility actions in the health promotion area (e.g. a campaign against breast cancer run under the motto ‘To the health of the woman with love’).

Concomitantly, the company set up its targets for 2011-2015 addressing its business growth objectives but also safer and healthier workplaces, employees’ wellbeing at work, a sustainable development and community oriented actions.

- **A Global Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Policy**

The Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Policy has provided global standards and procedures meant to specify the minimum safety and health requirements to be observed by the employees at all the levels within the high risk working areas.

These global standards and procedures on occupational safety and health have been implemented in AstraZeneca Bulgaria for its over one hundred employees and all the other AstraZeneca Global subsidiaries as well.

The objectives set up within the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Policy are as follows:

- ‘Zero’ tolerance to fatalities
- A reduction by 25% in work accidents and illnesses (combined accident and illness rate)
- A decrease by 40% in the collision rate through a series of driver safety improvement measures
- Identifying the workplace related risks and ensure that they are well understood and responsibly managed by the employees
- Raising workers’ awareness on the personal health risks they are exposed to at the workplace and encouraging them to report any work incident and/or injury
- Enabling the employees to manage these risks through adequate preventive actions and foster the adoption of a no blame attitude by the work supervisors
- Providing well targeted safety and health training for the employees covering the most specific workplace related risks
- Tailored training for the young workers to enable them cope with the lack of work expertise, underestimation of the workplace related risks, less skills. The adoption of a preventive behaviour at
work has been highly encouraged alongside with reporting any work related incidents that might lead to more serious injuries and illnesses

- Ensuring that a safety behaviour and preventive actions are integrated all over the company activities and adopted by the managers and workplace supervisors, and the executive personnel as well
- Encouraging the employee engagement at all the levels of the company
- Ongoing development of the management and leadership capabilities
- Ensure management is visible within the company at the workplace level and encourage workers’ feedback on the workplace related risks for their health and safety
- Putting focus on continuous improvement and setting clear targets as concerns the company business objectives and innovative R&D activities meant to ensure a high performance and safety culture at organisational level, and a healthier workforce
- Fostering a sustainable development through the utilisation of environment friendly technologies and products, and a responsible waste management.

A special focus has been put on the driver safety measures within the SHE Policy of AstraZeneca Global as driving represents the highest risk of fatal accidents and serious injuries for the employees (approximately 23,000 people belong to the sales forces of the company worldwide).

In 2009, AstraZeneca Global launched the DriveSuccess Programme that was further revised in 2011 as part of the SHE Policy.

The programme consisted of a series of workshops organised in Europe and attended by the delegates from 74 countries hosting the company subsidiaries, AstraZeneca Bulgaria included. An action plan was adopted by the senior management team following the workshops. Good practice is permanently shared within the participants and a self-assessment survey is carried out yearly to measure the results obtained. Measuring the programme performance helps to a great extent to put emphasis on those aspects that need more attention and improvement.

AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria, in addition to the general DriveSuccess Programme measures, extended this programme to all its employees irrespective of their workplace. The employees’ driving skills have been evaluated and individual preparing programmes have been put in place to mitigate the risk of road accidents and reduce the collision rate.

‘We believe that a safe, healthy and energising working environment brings benefit for our employees and for our business, through people’s sustained engagement and contribution to AstraZeneca’s success.’

- **A Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

A new Health and Wellbeing Strategy was launched in January 2011 as a complementary initiative to the SHE Policy.

The issue of a new strategy on health and wellbeing for the employees was the result of reviewing the health and wellbeing related measures applied within the company in 2010. The review highlighted ‘a lack of global consistency’ of the programmes addressing employee health and wellbeing despite a significant number of such programmes put in place.

To eliminate this lack of consistency, the company new approach to health and wellbeing put emphasis on employees’ better understanding of the hazardous work situations for their safety and health while enabling them to responsibly cope with these risks. An appropriate education and training of the employees constituted the ‘right tools’ to attain this goal.

The new Health and Wellbeing Strategy mainly addressed:

- a preventive approach to work related illness
A ‘pro-active, sustainable and targeted improvement’ in terms of worker engagement and the management of the work overload throughout the organisation.

A framework was set up as part of the new strategy meant to:

- the promotion of employee health and wellbeing in a more effective way
- providing adequate management and measuring instruments of the health and wellbeing activities developed within the company.

The strategy implementation has been accomplished by a governance team constituted of senior personnel with key positions within the company, at local and regional level. An adequate system was set up to measure the performance attained in accomplishing the main objectives of the strategy and to identify further improvement requirements.

The strategy encompasses major development directions as follows:

Self - Management of Work Overload:

A series of training modules were elaborated to support the leadership and the executive personnel of the company to manage the work overload related pressure. A more efficient management of the energy at work is envisaged to avoid harmful effects upon the employees’ health. The Workplace Pressure Management was particularly addressed through four pilot projects carried out in 2011. A more comprehensive programme is provided as part of the 2012 -2015 targets of the company.

These projects aimed at providing a safe and healthy working environment, and promoting employee wellbeing as crucial factors allowing the employees to attain a full potential at work. Improved training, acquiring of increased knowledge and skills, worker engagement, management commitment, colleagues’ supportive behaviour could be positive factors meant to fight the workplace related stress. Adequate Human Resources policies and counselling/psychotherapy support are also promoted among the project objectives.

Health Screening:

Health screening is ensured for the employees alongside with further medical advising to improve their health condition and healthy lifestyle as well. For the time being, besides AstraZeneca Bulgaria, health screening is provided only for 47% of AstraZeneca Global subsidiaries.

Essential Health Activities:

A number of 6 essential health programmes and services has been put in place at AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria addressing employee health and wellbeing.

For the time being, these programmes are implemented only within 80% of AstraZeneca Global worldwide sites. Therefore, one of the company’s improvement targets for 2011 – 2015 consists of extending the development of such programmes to over 80% of the sites and to have them entirely put in place by 2015.

In accordance with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy framework, six global programmes and services have been promoted as regards the Essential Health Activities. They are as follows:

- Physical Fitness
- Healthy Business Travel
- Workplace Pressure Management
- Tobacco Use Cessation
- Healthy Eating
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- General Health Promotion.

Adequate standards and guidelines have been elaborated to allow the implementation of these six programmes and services for the employees.

AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria particularly addresses the below health promotion measures as part of the Essential Health Activities run at the company level:

- An extensive package of medical assistance services for the employees and their family members
- A yearly general screening for all the employees (e.g. laboratory tests, lifestyle questionnaires, including information on diet, tobacco smoking, physical activities)
- Annual screening for the female employees to detect breast cancer as part of the breast cancer fighting programme
- Providing a daily menu free of charge for all the employees to encourage the adoption of a healthy diet.

- Work-Life Balance

In 2010, an employee opinion survey highlighted the need of improving the work-life balance for the company employees worldwide. Following the survey results, a booklet was issued including a set of Global Work-Life Balance principles alongside with a series of case studies. They were meant to promote open debates at all the company levels and to foster the adoption of improvement solutions. An online version of the booklet was also provided for the employees.

- Learning and Development (L&D) Programmes

At all the company levels, the emphasis is very much on supporting each individual to reach his/her full potential at the workplace through the continuous improvement of the employee work ability.

On this purpose, the company strongly encourages lifelong learning and promotes knowledge and know-how sharing among its employees. A training plan is drawn up on a yearly basis specifying the training topics and an appropriate time schedule for implementation.

Therefore, AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria has put in place a series of L&D Programmes. They are meant to support the employees to acquire adequate knowledge and work skills and develop appropriate work abilities fully responding to their workplace demands.

The annual training plan is elaborated when considering the individual development plans set up on the basis of employee consultation on the key areas of improvement and the specific supporting measures envisaged. These development plans also provide ‘training mentoring, tutoring, work on projects, exchange of experience and sharing of good practices’. Meanwhile, they support the company management in setting up its development directions and training priorities for its workforce.

Platforms for self-learning and e-learning are also available at AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria. They are highly supported by a global e-learning system that is put in place within AstraZeneca Global worldwide sites.

- Employee Engagement and Communication

Open communication between the leadership and the employees is seen as a key factor in supporting the employees to engage with the accomplishment of the company business strategy and get aware of their role within a safe and healthy working environment.

The company has strongly encouraged the dialogue at all the personnel levels and developed a wide range of communication tools on this purpose. So, in addition to the meetings attended by the
employees and the managing personnel on a regular basis, intranet, videoconferences and a social media tool called 'Yammer’ have been also put in place.

The employees’ consultation is achieved through open dialogue and effective participation in the decision making process at the company level. So, in the beginning of each calendar year, the leadership discusses the business results obtained with the employees and analyses the aspects to be improved.

Employees’ comments and improvement suggestions are collected through an employee survey (FOCUS) that is anonymously carried out on a yearly basis. The employees’ opinions are considered by the management of the company to draw up the global development plan and to identify the strong and the weak points. This global development plan established at the company level is accompanied by an individual development plan for the employees as well.

In 2010, the FOCUS survey showed that communication should be improved within the company. Consequently, the Senior Executive Team (SET) participated in a significant number of interactive sessions with a positive feedback from the employees. Similar actions were carried out by the SET members within AstraZeneca Global subsidiaries across four continents amounting over 120 meetings.

- **Human Resources Management**

AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria also develops a well targeted human resources management that successfully accompanies the SHE Policy and the Health and the new Wellbeing Strategy put in place in 2011.

This Human Resources Management encompasses a large range of actions addressing: a careful recruitment and selection of the workforce on the basis of judicious procedures, ensuring social/job security, providing fair wages for the employees as compared to the work task demands versus the obtained results, high quality training, career opportunities and assistance in emergency situations. These measures are meant to increase the employees’ satisfaction at work and to get a motivated workforce ready to contribute to the highest extent to the business success of the company.

Programmes are also put in place to avoid any kind of discrimination, including as concerns the disabled workers. Reinsertion policies and re-training programmes address the disabled workers’ needs and encourage their reinsertion within the company after suffering work accidents and/or serious diseases.

- **Social Responsibility**

The company is highly involved in a large variety of social responsibility initiatives addressing the local communities, sponsorship actions, the observance of the Ethical Code of Practice within a responsible development business strategy.

AstraZeneca Bulgaria is thus actively involved in the fight against breast cancer through dedicated campaigns. An example is the campaign run under the motto ‘To the health of the woman with love’ that is meant to promote cancer prevention through the regular screening and early diagnosis of cancer. Significant funds have been raised through charity events as the auction organized at ‘Musala’ Hall of the Hilton Hotel in Sofia held on 7 December 2011. On this occasion, 30 pieces of iconic pink shirts signed by well known Bulgarian and foreign artists were sold.

In fighting breast cancer, AstraZeneca Bulgaria joined prestigious medical entities but equally civil society representatives, foreign embassies in Bulgaria, fashion magazines, etc. within an enlarged partnership (e.g. the National Oncology Institute, National Cancer Register, oncologists, patient societies, the Fight Against Cancer Foundation, the British and Italian Embassy, International Women Club of Sofia, Lifestyle magazine and a series of fashion brands).

Fig. 2 The charity auction organised by AstraZeneca Bulgaria as part of the campaign ‘To the health of the woman with love’
AstraZeneca Bulgaria has also supported the development of sports in the country as, for instance, the National Festival of Traditional Martial Arts ‘Young Friends of Police’ held in November 2009.

Fig. 3 AstraZeneca Bulgaria team honoured with a special award by the Bulgarian Sports Association for actively supporting the development of sports in Bulgaria (2009)

2.4. **What was achieved?**

The objectives of the SHE Policy were entirely achieved in 2011 (‘zero’ fatalities, a decrease by 25% in work accident and illness rate, a reduction by 40% in driving incidents etc.).

The new Strategy on Health and Wellbeing at AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria has been successfully implemented despite its multi-faceted approaches.

The measures taken in this respect statistically resulted in 2% improvement in terms of work-life balance and the wellbeing index as shown by the employee opinion survey run in 2011.

The company obtained national and international recognition for its outstanding results and was rewarded with numerous prizes for its safety, health and wellbeing performance and the social
responsibility actions carried out. They brought high national and international visibility to AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria, at community level and within the pharmaceutical sector as well.

Some of these awards are as follows:


Fig. 4 AstraZeneca team awarded with the ‘International Stevie Business Award’ (2007)

- The ‘Best Employer 2008’ award at the category of medium and small companies in Bulgaria (on the basis of a Hewitt Associates survey), 2008

Fig. 5 The ‘Best Employer 2008’ awarding ceremony (2008)

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1 http://www.stevieawards.com/pubs/iba/awards/171_694_3033.cfm
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- The ‘Employer with the best social policies and practices’ award for the individual approach to employee needs in terms of worker overall satisfaction with workplace conditions and work-life balance, 2009

Fig. 6 The ‘Employer with the best social policies and practices’ awarding ceremony (2009)

- The ‘Socially Responsible Company of the Year’ awarded at the annual contest ‘Participating in Long-Term Community Impact’, 2010, in the presence of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of Bulgaria.

Fig. 7 The ‘Socially Responsible Company of the Year’ awarding ceremony (2010)

'We want our people to feel positive and enthusiastic about what they are doing, with a clear sense of purpose and confidence in their ability to meet the challenges. This means providing them with effective leadership, clear targets, open lines of communication, excellent learning
and development opportunities and a healthy, safe and energising workplace – within a performance culture in which diversity is valued and individual success depends solely on personal merit and performance.’

2.5. Success factors
The success of AstraZeneca Global Bulgaria in getting a satisfied and motivated workforce resides in the high quality of its policies and strategies addressing occupational health and safety, the environment, health and wellbeing strategies, human resources and social responsibility. The following aspects might be considered as key success factors at the implementation of these multi-faceted approaches:

- The consistent financial and human resources allocated at the company level in order to put in place and make operational these initiatives
- The implementation of these policies within the company in close coordination with the policies applied across AstraZeneca Global sites worldwide
- Flexible adaptation tools and the capability to correct and/or to improve the existing policies and measures addressing the workforce safety, health and wellbeing through employee opinion surveys carried out on a regular basis. This allowed the company management to eliminate the wrong directions and to promote corrective and improvement measures
- The strong and effective emphasis the company lays on the individual development and improvement (high quality training, ensuring workforce satisfaction and motivation, adequate human resources management fostering career opportunities, judicious recruitment and selection procedures, improvement of employee knowledge and work skills)
- The development of a large range of communication instruments allowing an effective communication among the management and the employees
- Worker participation in the decision making process at all the company levels on the basis of increased dialogue and consultation.

‘Engaged employees, who are true to our core values, supported by accountable and empowered leaders driving performance, underpin the continuous success of our business’ (Lynn Tetrault, Executive Vice-President, Human Resources and Corporate Affairs).

2.6. Further information

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2.7. Transferability
This example of successful Safety, Health, Environment & Wellbeing policies and strategies at AstraZeneca Global subsidiary in Sofia, Bulgaria, represents a model that might be transferred to other companies, not only in Bulgaria but also to the entire region.

The management of change policy developed by AstraZeneca Global might be used by similar companies in the pharmaceutical sector and/or at regional level to cope with the diversity of the existing
working conditions and of the workforce at each company level, providing that the companies are committed to invest in:

- ongoing improvement of R&D activities
- advanced technologies and innovation
- workforce health and safety policies
- employee wellbeing
- efficient human resources management
- sustainable development.

3. References, resources:

- AstraZeneca Global
  Website available at: [http://www.astrazeneca.com](http://www.astrazeneca.com)

- AstraZeneca Global – Bulgaria
  Website available at: [http://www.astrazeneca.bg](http://www.astrazeneca.bg)

- AstraZeneca Annual Report and Form 20-F Information 2011

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